

## Sūrah Hujurat

### **Tone of the Sūrah and its Relationship with the Previous one**

This *sūrah* is the addendum and supplement of the preceding *sūrah*: Sūrah Fath. The last verse of the previous *sūrah* mentions with reference to the Torah the following attribute of the Prophet (sws) and his companions (rta): (٢٩ : ٤٨) مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ (Muhammad, the Messenger of God and those who are with him are stern to the disbelievers but merciful to one another, (48:29)). This whole *sūrah* is an explanation of this verse. The importance of this verse has already been elaborated upon in the *tafsīr* of the previous *sūrah*. It was this importance of this verse which required that all of its implications and insinuations be elucidated here which were essential for the reformation of the Muslim society. I have already explained this at a relevant place in this *tafsīr* that these directives were revealed in the Qur'ān in accordance with the requirements of the circumstances so that people become aware of their importance. Thus this *sūrah* too was revealed in circumstances when certain things emanated from converts which showed that neither were they fully aware of the status and position of the Prophet (sws) nor of their responsibilities in an Islamic society. Thus important directives were revealed in this supplementary *sūrah* which were necessary for the circumstances of those times. All these directives relate to the mutual rights of the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims. The matter of the disbelievers is not discussed in it. The attitude which Muslims should adopt towards them has been alluded to in the previous *sūrahs*.

The nature of relationship of Sūrah Nūr with Sūrah Mu'minūn in the third group of *sūrahs* is the same as the relationship of this *sūrah* with that of Sūrah Fath. Both *sūrahs* have a similar tone.

### **Analysis of the Meanings**

**Verses (1-5):** Muslims are warned that Muḥammad is a Messenger of God. It is not allowed for Muslims to give priority to their own views over the views and directives of the Prophet (sws). They must also not raise their voice above his, and also must not address him as they address one another. The Almighty nurtures the seed of piety in only those hearts which have regard and respect for the Prophet (sws). Those who express

---

their superiority while talking to him because they think that they have done Allah and the Prophet (sws) a favour by accepting Islam should be aware that this attitude might render vain all their deeds whilst they may not even realize this loss.

**Verses (6-10):** The dealings of Muslims with one and another should be based on brotherhood and fraternity and not on the basis of association with a particular party or group. It is totally forbidden for a Muslim faction to launch an assault over another Muslim faction by trusting the account of an evil doer, something upon which they would themselves feel ashamed later on. In all important affairs, they should leave the decision-making to the Prophet (sws) and follow his directives. To obtain the support and sympathy of the Prophet (sws), no party should unduly pressurize him. This would be showing disregard to the blessing of faith the Almighty has bestowed them with. After tasting the flavour of faith, anything done unworthy of it would be tantamount to a return to disbelief and disobedience. The Almighty has endeared faith to them and made disbelief and wrongdoing abhorrent to them precisely to prevent this return. The *sūrah* further gives guidance to the believers when two of their parties take up arms against one another. They must not support either of these parties because of their association with it; instead they should view the whole affair with justice and fairness and try to make peace between them. If one of the parties refuses to submit to what has been ascertained as justice, then Muslims should forcibly make them submit to it.

**Verses (11-13):** Muslims are advised to refrain from all those activities which create hatred among them and which ignite the flames of disorder and disruption in the society. No Muslim should mock or make fun of another Muslim or defame him or call him by insulting names. Muslims should also avoid immoderate suspicion, and also refrain from hunting down each others' mistakes. Moreover, they must also abstain from backbiting. Pride and vanity about one's clan, family or creed are relics of the period of ignorance before Islam and must not be persisted with. The Almighty has created all mankind from a single pair of man and woman: Adam and Eve. The real aim behind dividing mankind into various groups and tribes is merely for identifying each separately. The basis of honour in the sight of Allah is piety and not association with a particular clan or tribe.

**Verses (14-18):** The concluding verses, in essence, reiterate what had been hinted at the beginning of the *sūrah*. It becomes clear from these verses that the people who are under discussion in the initial verses of the *sūrah* are the Bedouins who lived in the whereabouts of Madīnah and who had accepted Islam only because they were over-awed by its

increasing political strength. Therefore, the true essence of faith had not found its way into their hearts and they arrogantly reckoned that they had done the Prophet (sws) a great favour by accepting Islam. As a result, they had developed a conceited attitude and behaviour, about which actually they have been warned in the beginning of the *sūrah*. Here, at the end, the Almighty has asked the Prophet (sws) to convey to these people that they must not think that Islam is indebted to them; the Almighty has full knowledge of their inner and outer selves. Though they have submitted, yet faith has not found its roots in their hearts. They have done Islam no favour by accepting faith; rather the Almighty has done them a favour by guiding them to faith. If they now fulfil the obligations which their faith now imposes on them, they shall be duly rewarded, for the Almighty is watching all their deeds.

### Section I: Verses (1-10)

#### Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْدَمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١)  
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ  
بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ (٢) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَعْصُونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ  
عندَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ لِلتَّقْوَى لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (٣) إِنَّ  
الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنَ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٤) وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ  
إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٥) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ  
فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ (٦) وَاعْلَمُوا أَن فِيكُمْ  
رَسُولٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ لَعَنِتُّمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ  
وَزَيَّنَّهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ (٧)  
فَضَلَّاهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَنِعْمَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٨) وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلَحُوا  
بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِن بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَفِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِن  
قَاتَتْ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ (٩) إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ

فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (١٠)

Believers! Do not given preference to your view over that of God and the Messenger. And have fear of God. Indeed, God hears all and knows all. (1)

Believers! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor call him the way you call one another lest your deeds should come to nothing without you even being aware of it. Remember that those who speak gently in the presence of God's Prophet are the men whose hearts God has selected to nurture piety. For them are forgiveness and a great reward. (2-3)

Indeed, most of those who call out to you while you are in your chambers are naive. If they waited with patience until you went out to them, it would have been better for them. And God is Forgiving and Merciful. (4-5)

Believers! If a defiant person brings you a piece of news, investigate it thoroughly lest you assail someone unknowingly then regretting your action. And fully bear in mind that God's messenger is among you. If he follows you in many matters, you would encounter many difficulties. But God has endeared faith to you and ingrained it in your hearts and made disbelief, defiance, and disobedience abhorrent to you. These are the people who are rightly guided through God's grace and bounty. And God is All-knowing and Wise. (6-8)

And if two groups from among the believers take up arms against one another, make peace between them. Then if one of them unjustly attacks the other, fight against the aggressors till it submits to God's judgement. So if it submits, reconcile them with fairness and administer full justice. Indeed, God loves those who exercise justice. Muslims are brothers to one another so reconcile your brothers and fear God that you may be shown mercy. (9-10)

### Explanation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْدِّمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ<sup>١</sup>

Though common Muslims are addressed, yet the attitude of those Muslims is discussed in this *sūrah*, as will gradually become evident from the later verses, who were the Bedouins of the whereabouts of Madīnah; they had accepted faith after they witnessed the emerging strength of Islam, and faith had not fully found its roots in their hearts. The first reason for this was that they had not embraced Islam after understanding it

---

1. Believers! Do not given preference to your view over that of God and the Messenger. And Have fear of God. Indeed, God hears all and knows all.

but because had been were over-awed by it. Secondly, since they were cut off from the centre, they could not be properly educated and instructed. They were also afflicted with this conceited notion that since they had showed obedience to the Prophet (sws) without being attacked so they had done him a great favour. It was as a result of this notion that when their leaders would come to Madīnah they would talk to the Prophet (sws) as though they had done a great favour and service to Islam. Even without being asked for advice, they would take the initiative to assertively give suggestions. To express their own superiority, they would raise their own voice above that of the Prophet (sws). Whenever they would come, they would desire that the Prophet (sws) leaving aside all his involvements immediately attend to them and in case of any delay, they would shout unhesitatingly near his chamber to call him the way one calls an ordinary person. Each person would try to win the support of the Prophet (sws) in the various rifts and jealousies they were engaged against each other with ever since the days of *jāhiliyyah*. To achieve this end, they would at times try to give such information to the Prophet (sws) regarding their adversaries which would create a wrong perception about them in his mind. If in on the basis of this information, had the Muslims of Madīnah taken some step, then this could have been very harmful to the collective life of the Muslims.

It is these circumstances in which this *sūrah* was revealed. Though a the attitude of a specific group of Muslims is discussed in it, as was indicated earlier, the words of address of the Qur'ān are general so that this group is not put to disgrace too much and all doors are closed for Satan to ignite mischief and nuisance in the society.

It needs to be kept in consideration that the prohibition stated here is to take the initiative before the Messenger of God in presenting one's view or to give preference to one's view to that of God and His Messenger; the prohibition does not relate to mere presentation of one's opinion before the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) would often ask for the opinions of the Companions (rta) in various affairs and they would also present them to him. Similarly, at times, the Companions (rta) would say to him that in case such and such a measure of his is not based on divine revelation, then in their opinion a certain other plan would be better. At times, the Prophet (sws) would even accept their opinion. This verse does not forbid such things. The Prophet (sws) through his very attitude has encouraged this. It is mentioned in certain narratives that the Prophet (sws) was one who would seek consultation from people the most. The Almighty too, as is evident from: *وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ* (۱۵۹:۳) (and consult them in affairs. (3:159)), had directed the Prophet (sws) to keep consulting people.

The prohibition relates to what we have referred to earlier: a person while regarding the Messenger of God to be a common person or a mere leader and regarding his own self to be superior to him tries to influence the Messenger with his opinion which was never asked in the first place and to give preference to it over that of the Messenger. If someone does this, then his attitude bears evidence to the fact that he is absolutely unaware of the real position and status of the Prophet (sws). A messenger of God is His representative and whatever he does or says is at the bidding of God. If a person is bold enough to give preference to his own views over his, then this, in other words, would mean that he regards his own view to be superior to that of God; this will lay waste all his beliefs and deeds without him even knowing it.

The words *بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ* show that the matter of God and His Messenger is not distinct from one another. A messenger of God is His representative and envoy. Giving him unasked for advice is like giving advice to God; giving preference to one's own opinion over his is like giving preference to one's own opinion about God's opinion and to regard one self to be more wise is to regard one self to be wiser than the all-knowing God. These are the necessary consequences of this attitude of a person. It is possible that because of foolishness a person does not realize these consequences, but it cannot be refuted that these are the necessary consequences.

The words *وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ* sound a warning to these people that they should keep fearing God and not be in the craze of regarding themselves to be wiser and sagacious than God and His Messenger. God is all-hearing and all-knowing; He is listening to what they are saying and is also fully aware of the motives behind them. What is implied is that when He sees and knows all, then the law of retribution will definitely come into play. The succeeding verse mentions this law.

This verse warns the people of our times as well who while claiming to serve Islam are distorting its values and tampering with its laws. They are of the view that the form in which God and His Messenger has given Islam has gone obsolete and that it is essential that it be adapted to the needs of the current era. Thus they are changing the directives of the *sharī'ah* as per their own view. The only difference is that the verse mentions people who wanted to take lead in presenting their suggestions to God and His Messenger, while the claimants to Islam of this era did not get this chance so they are now, God forbid, correcting the mistakes made by God and His Messenger regarding religion.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ<sup>2</sup>(٢)

This verse alludes to another aspect of what is said above: those who are inflicted with the satanic thought that they are in a position to give advice to God and His Messenger or those who vainly reckon that they did a great favour to Islam and the Prophet (sws) by embracing faith cannot be humble and courteous in their conversation with the Prophet (sws). In fact, a reflection of this vanity in their conversation was quite natural. Thus when these people would speak to the Prophet (sws) it would become evident from their style that instead of learning from the Messenger of God they had actually come to teach him. Consequently, just as they would take the lead in presenting their views, they would also try that their voice be loud and imposing on the Prophet (sws) and when they would address him, then instead of respectfully addressing him by the words “O Messenger of God!”, they would say “O Muḥammad!” as if they were conversing with some of their own common compatriots. Here, they are stopped to address the Prophet (sws) in such a disrespectful way because this attitude clearly shows that they had not yet recognized his true position and status; moreover, hidden in them was the pride of their own superiority which will ultimately lay waste their deeds.

I have been referring to the fact that the words to the effect كراهة or مخافة are suppressed before أَنْ تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ. If this suppression is unfolded, the discourse would be something to the effect: You are being stopped from this disrespectful behaviour lest this lays waste all their deeds before God.

The implication of the words وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ is that though these people conceitedly reckoned that they had done a great service to Islam and their anxiety to benefit the Prophet (sws) from their opinion was from among their love to serve religion, yet all their deeds will be of no use to them which they reckoned to have done for the cause of religion and they would not even be aware of this.

It is evident from this that at times a person in his own view does a lot of things which he thinks are a service to religion, however, if he has this conceited intention in him that he is doing a favour to God or His messenger or His religion and as a result he neither pays true regard to

---

2. Believers! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor call him the way you call one another lest your deeds should come to nothing without you even being aware of it.

the exaltedness of God nor show the true respect His Messenger deserves, then all his deeds will come to nothing and he will only come out of this unawareness of his only in the Hereafter. God is not dependent on anyone for the service of His religion so that a person thinks himself to have done a favour to Him and His Messenger. Only the deeds of those people will be blessed enough to be accepted by Him who would serve the cause of His religion only to please Him in accordance with the bounds and limits set by Him; at the same time, they would acknowledge from their hearts that by doing this service they did not do any favour to God or His Messenger; on the contrary, God has done them a favour that He gave them the urge to be of some service to His religion.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَغُضُّونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (٣)

This verse teaches the right etiquette which is essential for every believer to adopt regarding the Prophet (sws). The verse says that those who keep down their voices before the Prophet (sws) are the ones whose heart the Almighty has selected to nurture the seeds of piety. The word امْتَحَنَ encompasses the meaning of the word اِصْطَفَىٰ or some word of similar meaning. It is evident from this that not every heart is appropriate for sowing and nurturing the seeds of piety; the Almighty selects such hearts by making them pass through a test. The real thing which becomes a reason for preference in this is whether a person has a true zeal to submit before God and His messenger and the awareness of being humble before them. The more a person has this the more he is blessed with piety and the more a person is devoid of it the farther away is he from piety. Raising one's voice is mentioned here as a reflection of a person's inner self, as has been indicated earlier. A person who tries to raise his voice over that of another shows by this very act of his that he regards himself to be superior to him. This attitude closes doors to gain and acquire more. Anyone who adopts this attitude with the Messenger of God will not only be deprived of the blessings and benefits of the Messenger but also of the urge from God because the Messenger is God's Messenger.

The same status is occupied by God's Book and the Sunnah of the

---

3. Remember that those who speak gently in the presence of God's Prophet are the men whose hearts God has selected to nurture piety. For them are forgiveness and a great reward.



Messenger. Only those hearts are selected by God for nurturing piety which are humble and submit themselves before the Book and Sunnah the way Muslims have been directed to be humble before the Messenger of God. A person who has the sincere zeal of submitting himself before every directive of God and His Messenger will find before him many opportunities to grow in his piety as well as divine help at every step. If a person conceitedly reckons that he is in a position to reform the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, then this vanity of his will lay waste his deeds and lead him to a grievous fate in the Hereafter.

Consider now the next part of the verse: **لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ**. In the earlier verse, it was stated that those people who raise their voice above that of the Prophet's voice will find their deeds going waste. Now, here, in contrast, the fate of those people is mentioned who keep down their voices before that of the Prophet (sws): for them is forgiveness and great reward. In other words, God will forgive their blemishes because they remained humble before God and His Messenger. Their vanity and haughtiness did not make them bold enough to regard themselves to be superior to God and His Messenger. The reward they got for this attitude was that God chose their hearts to nurture the seed of piety in them – something whose reward in turn is great in the eyes of God.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٤)

Just as these people were disrespectful to the Prophet (sws) in his gatherings, they were also discourteous in shouting to him from outside the chambers of his to call him in gatherings he had not come. Such a behaviour is disrespectful in itself; however, its inner motive was even more ignominious than its outer expression. These people, as I have alluded to earlier with more details forthcoming thought were in the misunderstanding that since they had embraced Islam without any war or armed struggle they had done a great favour to Islam and the Prophet (sws). For this reason, the thought that it was their right that when they come the Prophet (sws) should greet them without any delay. If he would not be present at that moment, they would not wait for him and start encircling the chambers of the wives of the Prophet (sws) and call out his name in a very disrespectful manner. The verse says that most of them have no sense. The words **أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ** harbour in them a rebuke on their foolishness and also very subtly hint to the Prophet (sws) to forgo this

---

4. Indeed, most of those who call out to you while you are in your chambers are naive.

foolishness of theirs: even though they are guilty of doing something very ill-mannered yet their majority is neither aware of the status of the Prophet (sws) nor of the fate of this behaviour; so they need instruction and training and are worthy of being ignored.

The word *وَرَاءَ* (behind) in the expression *وَرَاءَ الْحُجُرَاتِ* does not necessitate that they used to call out from behind the chambers and this was the reason for the rebuke. This word does not specifically mean “behind”. In the Arabic language, the expression *وَرَاءَ الدَّارِ* would only mean “he called out to me from outside the house” regardless of whether from the back of the house or from the front. What made this act objectionable was the way in which they would address the Prophet (sws). It needs to be kept in consideration that it is against respect to call even a common person in this manner what to speak of the Prophet (sws). The proper way of addressing people to meet them has already been delineated in Sūrah Nūr.

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ<sup>5</sup>

This verse informs them of the correct etiquette they should have adopted: had they been patient enough to wait for you to come out, this would have earned them great blessings. The style of the verse is to express sorrow at their deprivation. The implication is that had they recognized and valued the fountain that they had reached, their thirst would have been quenched; it is their deprivation that because of not duly honouring this opportunity they lost what they had, what to speak of gaining something from it.

By the words *وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ* the Almighty has reminded the Prophet (sws) of His attributes of forgiveness and mercy and the purpose is to subtly direct his attention to the fact that even though these people are guilty of such unworthy acts they are a people bereft of sense and reason; so at present he should ignore these acts. God is forgiving and merciful and it is but appropriate that His Prophet too should be forgiving and merciful.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ<sup>6</sup>

This verse informs the Muslims of Madīnah of a certain political threat:

5. If they waited with patience until you went out to them, it would have been better for them. And God is Forgiving and Merciful.

6. Believers! If a defiant person brings you a piece of news, investigate it thoroughly lest you assail someone unknowingly then regretting your action.

I have referred to earlier that it is the behaviour of the leaders of certain Bedouin tribes of the whereabouts of Madīnah which is discussed here. Just as these people were bereft of the awareness of the high stature of the Prophet (sws), they were also until then bereft of the sentiments of Islamic brotherhood. The effects of the jealousy and hate they harboured for one another in the days of ignorance were still found in them. When they would come to Madīnah, some of them would give all kinds of right and wrong news about their adversaries in order to spoil the Prophet's opinion about them. They would also try to win the support of the Companions (rta) they could influence in this matter so that they were able to use the central power of Madīnah in their favour. This was a very precarious situation. The government of Madīnah in the first place was not yet fully stable. Secondly, any action on the basis of these baseless rumours, especially against some Muslim faction would have been against both justice and collective welfare. This situation necessitated that the centre of the Muslims be directed that in all such important affairs they altogether leave the decision to the discretion of the Prophet (sws); they should also not trust the reports of unreliable people thereby influencing the opinion of the Prophet (sws) in accordance with their own. Consequently, they were directed that if an insolent person brings news of some important event, then without thoroughly investigating the matter they should not take any step by relying on this news lest being over-awed with zeal they end up attacking an innocent faction and then later regret.

The word فَاسِقٌ (insolent) here refers to people who are indifferent to the bounds and limits of the *sharī'ah*. I have already presented my research on the word نَبَأٌ at a relevant place in this *tafsīr* that it refers to an important news accepting which or acting on which may have far reaching consequences. If such an important news is given by someone who is not reliable as regards his faiths and morals, then both sense and morality entail that his piece of information not be believed until both the information and the person given it are thoroughly investigated. It may be that such a person gave the information because of evil motives and the information may either be totally baseless or because of some ill-intention has been changed and adapted to inflame the emotions of the listeners. The word جَهَالَةٌ is used in the meaning of emotional frenzy and rage. I have presented research on this word as well at a relevant place in this *tafsīr*.

وَاَعْلَمُوا اَنَّ فِيكُمْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ لَعَنِتُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَبٌ  
إِلَيْكُمْ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمْ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولَٰئِكَ

هُمْ الرَّاشِدُونَ (٧) فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَنِعْمَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٨)<sup>7</sup>

These verses further emphasize the warning meted out earlier to the Muslims: the Messenger of God is present among them; hence they should not give so much importance to their opinions that they try to convince him into following them; on the contrary, they should follow him. Whatever steps he takes, he takes in the guidance of God. Hence their success both in this world and in the next is in following him and not in following their own feelings and emotions. If they want to present their opinion, they should respectfully do so and leave the decision to his discretion and should not desire that all their opinions be necessarily accepted. They should fully bear in mind that a lot of their opinions are raw; if the Messenger of God accepts these opinions, they will end up in a lot of bother; he only accepts those opinions they put forth which are correct. Because of the Messenger of God they are lucky enough to be divinely guided at every step; hence they should duly value this favour and show gratitude to God.

The word عَنِتَّ means “difficulty and hardship”. Thus لَعَنِتُّمْ would mean “you will get caught in great difficulty and hardship”. If a patient instead of following the doctor wants that the doctor follow his opinion, then it is very obvious that such a patient will end up in a lot of danger.

The words وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ say that precisely to save them from difficulty and hardship has the Almighty endeared faith to them and made it find roots in their hearts and has made disbelief and disobedience hateful and odious to them. The obligation they owe to this arrangement is that they should continue to love and hold dear their faith and none of their words and deeds be stained with disbelief and disobedience.

The preposition إِلَى after حَبَّبَ and كَرَّهَ refers to the special arrangement made by the Almighty through His Messenger to endear faith to them and to engender in them an abhorrence of disbelief and defiance. In the age of *jāhiliyyah*, all moral values had been muddled. Satan had made faith hateful and endeared disbelief and disobedience to people. Faith was so deeply concealed beneath multi-layers that to unveil its true beauty and radiance before people by slicing away these layers had become an onerous task. Similarly, Satan had made disbelief so

---

7. Fully bear in mind that God's messenger is among you. If he follows you in many matters, you would encounter many difficulties. But God has endeared faith to you and ingrained it in your hearts and made disbelief, defiance, and disobedience abhorrent to you. These are the people who are rightly guided through God's grace and bounty. And God is all-Knowing and Wise.

deceptively beautiful by various lures that to show its real horrendous face had become virtually impossible. It was a blessing of God that He sent His Messenger who after a long struggle and *jihād* unveiled faith in its true attractive form and made its majesty take root in their hearts. Similarly, he scraped away the artificial embellishments from the horrible face of disbelief and showed them its real hideous and abhorrent face and made them detest it. This topic is discussed here by the words *كَرَّهَ إِلَيَّ* and *حَبَّبَ إِلَيَّ*. In other words, he presented belief and disbelief in their original form before them as a result of which they became desirous of belief and hateful to disbelief. It is as if both these verbs comprise the meaning of *إِلَيَّ* and the preposition is pointing towards this meaning.

Here the object of the verb *حَبَّبَ* is faith alone while there are three objects of the verb *كَرَّهَ*: *كُفْرَ* (disbelief) and *فُسُوقَ* (defiance) and *عِصْيَانَ* (disobedience). The reason for this, as is indicated earlier, is that the people whose character is under discussion here were the ones who had till then not yet become fully aware of what was the opposite of disbelief. As a result, it required that they be told that it is not merely *كُفْرَ* (disbelief) which was contrary to belief; things belonging to the category of *فُسُوقَ* (defiance) and *عِصْيَانَ* (disobedience) are also the offshoots of disbelief and for this reason the Almighty has regarded them to be detestable as well.

Though the word *فُسُوقَ* has been used in the Qur'ān to connote *كُفْرَ*, yet since here it is used with *كُفْرَ*, it would refer that defiance shown to God by a person while laying claim to belief. The word *عِصْيَانَ* as per its context and occasion refers to the disobedience of the Messenger. Since disobeying his representatives is also an act of indirect disobedience to him, hence this thing is also included in its meaning.

The words *أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَنِعْمَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ* state that it is these people in whose hearts the majesty of faith has taken roots and who abhor the slightest trace of *كُفْرَ* (disbelief) and *فُسُوقَ* (defiance) and *عِصْيَانَ* (disobedience). They are, in reality, rightly guided and they received this guidance as a favour and blessing of God. Thus, they should remain thankful to God alone. Like the naïve, they should not think that these favours are the result of their own endeavours and that they have done a favour to God and His Messenger. The attributes are meant to emphasize that every act of God is based on His knowledge and wisdom. He does not blindly apportion things. He blesses only those with the gift of faith whom He finds worthy of it.

This verse showers praise on the Muslims of Madīnah who were continuously benefiting from the companionship of the Prophet (sws) and were fully devoted to God. Moreover, the context bears witness that

the verse is a slant on the raw Muslims whose shortcomings are being discussed since the initial verses of the *sūrah* and who belonged to the nearby tribes of Madīnah.

Our exegetes<sup>8</sup> as per their customary practice have also mentioned an occasion of revelation related to verse six: the Prophet (sws) sent Walīd ibn ‘Uqbah to collect *zakāh* from the tribe of Banū Muṣṭaliq; when he reached there, the tribesmen came out in the form of a procession to greet him; Walīd thought that these people had come out to fight him; fearing an attack, he ran back home and informed the Prophet (sws) that these people had become apostates and had refused to pay *zakāh*;<sup>9</sup> on hearing this news, the Prophet (sws) was very annoyed at the tribe of Banū Muṣṭaliq; he sent an army contingent or decided to send one when the Banū Muṣṭaliq tribe got news of this. Their leader immediately came over to the Prophet (sws) and assured him on oath that they had not even seen the face of Walīd what to speak of refusing to paying *zakāh*. After this explanation, the matter was resolved. In the opinion of our exegetes, this verse was revealed because of this narrative attributed to Walīd; Muslims were directed not take a hasty step by believing in the narration of a *fāsiq* person.

It is customary for our exegetes to cite an occasion of revelation for almost every verse. They have also cited an occasion of revelation for verse four earlier. I have not dealt with it because some authorities have criticized it; however, as far as the occasion of revelation of the verse under discussion is concerned, there is a consensus of the exegetes on it. Thus, analyzing it was essential.

The principle premise regarding narratives on occasion of revelation should always remain in consideration which I have mentioned in the preface to this *tafsīr*: if our early authorities mention an incident as an occasion of revelation for a verse, it does not necessitate that exactly that incident was the cause of revelation of that verse; they mean that this verse also guides us regarding that incident. This is the opinion of the scholars of exegetical interpretation, which is why I have cited it. Moreover, this also is known that most narratives which mention an occasion of revelation are *ḍa‘īf*, in fact, baseless. Hence it is essential that they be analyzed in the light of criteria based on both reason and

---

8. See for example: Abū al-Fadā’ Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1401 AH), 210-211.

9. Some narrators have reported that he did not run away because of fear but because he already had grievances with the tribe. So he came back without meeting them and instead reported to the Prophet (sws) that they had refused to pay *zakāh*. See: Ibid.

---

revelation lest this might lead to an untoward situation from which this verse had stopped Muslims to end up in.

If this occasion of revelation is analyzed in the light of reason, one will see that it has many flaws.

Firstly, the verse has asked Muslims not to trust a piece of news given by a *fāsiq* (defiant person). Before this incident there is nothing known to people from Walīd which could, God forbid, regard him as a *fāsiq*. Not only this, such was the nature of his reliability and trustworthiness that the Prophet (sws) entrusted him with the responsibility of collecting *zakāh*. If there had been some issue with his character, the Prophet (sws) would never have selected him for such an important service.

Secondly, if this occasion of revelation is accepted, then it will have to be conceded that the Prophet (sws), God forbid, was so unaware of his Companions (rta) that he would select those among them for such important positions who because of their dishonest misconduct would endanger both the citizens and the government. Such short-sightedness is not expected even from a common sane human being what to speak of the Prophet (sws).

Thirdly, if Walīd ran away from the tribe by regarding the group who had come out to receive him to be one armed to attack him and if he conveyed this impression of his to the Prophet (sws), then though this could be regarded as a naïve act on his part, however, as per the *sharī'ah*, it cannot be regarded as *fisq*. Had this been the case, the verse should have been something to the effect: "Believers! Do not entrust your responsible positions to simpletons who are not even able to distinguish between a welcoming faction and a warring faction." What needs to be kept in consideration is that had Walīd been such a simpleton, would the Prophet (sws) have entrusted him with such a political and fiscal position? Can the trait of being a simpleton suddenly emanate from a person which his surrounding people remained unaware of? Even a person like the Prophet (sws) was not able to discern it?

Fourthly, it is Walīd who was made the governor of Kūfah by the caliph 'Uthmān (rta) in his times. Was he not aware of the fact that as per a Qur'ānic verse, this person had been classified as a *fāsiq* and was not even eligible to narrate a report or to bear witness what to speak of governorship? If he was not aware, then it should be accepted that a rightly guided caliph as 'Uthmān (rta) who is also known as the collector of the Qur'ān, God forbid, did not have even as much knowledge of the Qur'ān as the narrators of reports of occasions of revelation.

I have referred to only a few aspects of this occasion of revelation; otherwise it has problems at every step. Some variants say that the Prophet

(sws) had sent the army contingent;<sup>10</sup> others say that he had decided to send it and had given an ultimatum to the Banū Muṣṭalaq that if they did not abstain, he would send someone who is like him (عندي كنفي) and at the same time while patting ‘Alī (rta) on his back to encourage him indicated that he will be sent for this campaign.<sup>11</sup> In some other narratives, it is said that he had sent Khālīd ibn Walīd (rta) for the campaign.<sup>12</sup> In short, the contradictions abound even though it is evident from the words لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ that if some such thing came before the Prophet (sws), he ignored it and people were warned that they should not try to influence him with their opinions.

In my opinion, this occasion of revelation has been concocted by the *rawāfiḍ* through which they not only wanted to bring Walīd’s name into disrepute but also that of ‘Uthman (rta) that he deliberately patronizing his relative<sup>13</sup> appointed a *fāsiq* as governor of Kūfah. Even during his tenure as governor of Kūfah, these horrible people did not spare Walīd and narrated such incidents reflecting his *fiṣq* which bring both laughter and tears: laughter at their intelligence and tears at the simplicity of our exegetes who cite such baseless reports in their exegesis even though they have no relation with the words and context of the verse.

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى  
فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَفِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ<sup>14</sup> (٩)

It was said in the previous verse that it is not allowed for Muslims to attack any faction of Muslims by relying on the report of a *fāsiq*. In this verse, Muslims or their government are guided what to do when two factions of Muslims are at war: they should try to resolve the issue. If either of the two is not ready for a reconciliation or after reconciliation commits an excess against the other by violating the terms of the reconciliation, then in this situation other Muslims or their government

10. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 4, 210.

11. See, for example: Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 4, 362.

12. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 4, 211.

13. It should remain in mind that Walīd ibn ‘Uqbah (rta) was a relative of ‘Uthmān (rta).

14. And if two groups from among the believers take up arms against one another, make peace between them. Then if one of them unjustly attacks the other, fight against the aggressors till it submits to God’s judgement. So if it submits, reconcile them with fairness and administer full justice.



should wage war against the perpetrators of excess until they submit to the truth.

The words *حَتَّى تَقِيَّءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ* mean to submit to the decision of the reconciliatory party. If a faction evades this decision, it is as if it evades to submit to the decision of God. This is because in order to resolve this situation this is what the Almighty has ordered and when God had commanded thus, then its status is that of God's decision.

The words *فَإِنْ قَاءَتْ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا* refer to the fact that if after this collective action by the Muslims they submit, then no further action should be taken against them on the grounds that they had adopted a rebellious attitude; on the contrary, peace shall be made between the two parties on the basis of justice, and the party which has been inflicted with damage shall be compensated for.

The word *أَقْسِطُوا* has come to fulfil the consequences of justice. The implication is that neither should unfair concession be granted to anyone nor should anyone be oppressed: whatever is the need of justice should be implemented fairly and squarely. It is such just people whom the Almighty keeps as friends.

The following collective principles can be derived from this verse:

1. If two groups among the Muslims are engaged in a fight with one another, other Muslims should not remain indifferent to this state of affairs and should not think that this matter does not concern them. Similarly, it is improper to support a group merely on the basis of familial or tribal bias without finding out which of the two is on the right. They must support the group which in their opinion is on the right, and, in no way, let such biases form the basis of their support or otherwise. They must try to fully comprehend the situation, and, then, try to reconcile the two groups.

2. If one of the groups is not willing to reconcile, or, insists on war or after reconciliation presents conditions which are against injustice, then, in this situation, it would be the duty of the Muslims to use force to make it submit to these conditions.

3. In such disputes, obeying the reconciliatory conditions presented in accordance with the directives of God and His Prophet (sws) by the neutral Muslims will be mandatory on the two factions the way it is mandatory to obey the directives of the *sharī'ah*. So much so, the faction which deviates from them will be declared war upon.

4. If after reconciliation a faction violates the conditions of reconciliation, then it shall be regarded as a transgressor. It is obligatory on the Muslims to curb him.

It should be kept in consideration that this directive relates to the

situation when there is a central power of the Muslims which has the authority to intervene between two such factions or groups. In this age, the complex situation has arisen that many small and large Muslim states have been set up. If a war is, God forbid, waged between them, then it is not allowed for other Muslims states to ignore this situation. Every one of them should make efforts to reconcile the warring states as is directed in this verse; however, practical intervention depends on the situation which relates to the political needs of the time. If the situation allows, use of force against the transgressing faction to make it submit to the truth will be totally justified. But if this can cause further complexities in the international situation, then practical intervention should be abstained from; however, there can be no abstention from the efforts to reconcile the two through diplomatic means.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (١٥)

All Muslims are brothers to one another. A dispute between them is, in the very first place, against their brotherhood; however, if Satan is able to instigate a dispute, then other Muslims should try to make peace between them and not to further ignite this enmity. The words **وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ** **لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ** say that Muslims should keep fearing God. If they become a means of death and destruction for their brethren or if they are involved in this brawl on the basis of some national, tribal, geographical or political expedience, then they should remember that they will not be able to save themselves from the grasp of God. Only those people will be regarded worthy of God's mercy who always try to strengthen the brotherhood established by Him; who neither do anything to weaken it nor, as far as they can, give opportunity to anyone else to do so.

The dual used in **أَخَوَيْكُمْ** does not necessitate that the war is between brothers only; in fact, this is used for two factions of the Muslims. Such usage of the dual is common in Arabic; examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

### The Source of *Jarḥ* and *Ta'dīl* in the Qur'ān

Our scholars of Ḥadīth regard verse six of Sūrah Hujurāt: ... **يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ فَاكْفُرُوا بِهِ لِتَقْبَلُوا لَهُ دِيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ** to be the source of the verifying the reliability or unreliability of the narrators of Ḥadīth as a result of which the great

---

15. Indeed, God loves those who exercise justice. Muslims are brothers to one another so reconcile your brothers and fear God that you may be shown mercy.

science of *rijāl* was born – which is one of the sciences whose pioneers are Muslims.

This verse directs Muslims to fully investigate a news given to them by a *fasīq*. This directive is indeed a general one for it is essential to investigate every news which can have far-fetched consequences. However, if someone attributes a report to the Prophet (sws), then it is even more important that it be scrutinized. The Prophet (sws) is a divinely appointed guide: each of his directives and practices is the best exemplar for the Muslims. If something is wrongly ascribed to the Prophet (sws) and it is accepted without inquiry, then this can result in a loss not only in this world but in the Hereafter as well.

Though the verse only asks Muslims to investigate the news given by a *fāsiq*, yet it is obvious that if a narrator is *majhūl* (not known) such that neither is he known to be trustworthy nor untrustworthy, then it is essential that he too be researched into. This is because there is a chance that accepting the report of an unknown narrator that person in reality is a *fāsiq*. Thus scholars of Ḥadīth have always investigated *majhūl* narrators so that their reliability or unreliability can be found out. If they were not able to find out the details of a narrator, they rejected him by regarding him to be *majhūl*.

It is also evident from the verse that this investigation is essential when a *fāsiq* gives a piece of news that has far reaching consequences. This is because the word used is نَبَأٌ which is used for a piece of news that is important and has far reaching consequences. This word is not used for a common piece of news or incident. Thus in general matters of every day life there is nothing wrong in accepting the information of a *fāsiq*.

The verse asks Muslims to investigate both the narrator and his narration since the words used are: “Believers! When a *fāsiq* brings a piece of news to you, investigate it.” It is obvious that the object of the verb فَتَبَيَّنُوا is both the narrator and his narration; in fact, the fact that narration is the object of the verb is even more evident. This is because it is already known that the narrator is *fāsiq*. In the investigation of a report, just as the reliability and trustworthiness of a narrator is important, even more important is to critically evaluate the words of the report, its context and background, its accordance or discordance with other reports, its analysis in the light of reason and revelation and most important of all its harmony with the Book God and related things. If only the narrator is scrutinized and all these aspects are disregarded, then it cannot be said that research has been thoroughly done. Our scholars of Ḥadīth mostly stress on scrutinizing the narrator and do not give much importance to scrutinizing the content of the report with regard to the aspects I have just

referred to. This is in spite of the fact that without researching into these aspects we cannot say that the investigation is thorough. It is for this reason that our jurists have enunciated principles to scrutinize the contents of a report and this process is called *darāyah*. The greatest share in this service is that of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah (ra). By contributing in this regard, he has not only done a great favour to *fiqh*, he has also done a great service to the discipline of Ḥadīth. Had our scholars of Ḥadīth properly applied these principles, the great propaganda and uproar against Ḥadīth would never have originated by mischief-mongers and which opened the way to many interventions in religion by many mislead sects. If God gave me the urge and time to write my proposed book on the principles of deliberation on Ḥadīth, I will inshā'Allāh try to elaborate upon the value and importance of these principles.

It is evident from the above details that it is in accordance with this explicit directive of the Qur'ān that our scholars of Ḥadīth have exposed *fāsiq* and *majhūl* narrators. However, in these times, some well-wishers of such narrators have asserted that exposing the blemishes of these narrators amounts to backbiting which the Qur'ān has prohibited in verse twelve of this very *sūrah* and regarded it to be equivalent to consuming the meat of one's dead brother. In their opinion, because of a certain "strategy", the scholars of Ḥadīth legalized this prohibition in order to save religion from the narratives of *fāsiq narrators*. From this point, they postulated an even more deeper and subtle point that none of the prohibitions of the *sharī'ah* are eternal. Hence, the leader of an Islamic Movement (*Tahrīk-i Islāmī*) has the right under the requisites of this "strategy" to legalize a prohibition. I have already humbly commented on these views in some of my articles;<sup>16</sup> there is neither need nor requirement to repeat this critique here. This much should suffice to say that why would the scholars of Ḥadīth legalize a thing as filthy as backbiting as part of this so called "strategy" when the Qur'ān has so explicitly directed to expose the *fāsiq* and *majhūl* narrators.

It also needs to be kept in consideration that regarding the impugning of narrators to be backbiting is the work of the exponents of *taṣawwuf*. Since the whole edifice of *taṣawwuf* stands on weak and baseless narratives, so when the scholars of Ḥadīth began ransacking the narrators of a report, these people thought that if this work continued fearlessly the whole edifice of *taṣawwuf* would be razed to the ground. In order to safeguard themselves from this danger, the exponents of *taṣawwuf*

---

16. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, Khalid Masud (ed.) *Maqalāt-i Iṣlāhī*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1991), 79-189.

started to allege that the scholars of Ḥadīth are indulging in backbiting. This point became very popular among the circles of *taṣawwuf*. This very point was adopted by some minds of the present age who dubbed it as “strategy”, and, on this basis, enunciated such a principle which could disfigure the whole religion.

In the end, another thing about this verse should be kept in mind. Some scholars of Ḥadīth and *fiqh* while investigating the narratives of a *fāsiq* person gave importance to the practical *fisq* which emanated from him while disregarding the *fisq* of his belief and ideology. It is their opinion that if a person is guilty of some practical *fisq* like telling a lie or has a bad moral conduct, then his narrative and testimony shall no doubt not be accepted; however, if he has belief which can be regarded as *fisq*, then merely on this basis his narrative or testimony shall not be rejected. In my opinion, this view is absolutely wrong. Experience shows that the number of narratives fabricated by people having beliefs which reflect *fisq* are much more than those fabricated by people whose deeds reflect *fisq*. It is their narratives which are found in great numbers in books of *sīrah*, *tafsīr*, *taṣawwuf* and history and which have been misused by innovators and misguided sects. May God have mercy on the scholars who have given this concession to narrators having *fisq* in their beliefs and in this manner set this *ummah* on a trial which is not at all easy for the upright.

In my opinion, this division between *fisq* in belief and *fisq* in practice is meaningless. There is nothing in the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth which supports this view. The general principle stated earlier regarded the *fasiq* is in accordance with reason and revelation if it is applied to the people who have *fisq* in their beliefs: their report and testimony shall be accepted in all matters in which the report of a disbeliever is acceptable; however, important, in particular religious matters, their report and testimony cannot possibly be accepted.

## Section II: Verses (11-13)

In verse seven earlier, the Almighty has mentioned the elaborate arrangement He had made to save Muslims out of His grace from *كُفْرَ* (disbelief) and *فُسُوقَ* (defiance) and *عِصْيَانَ* (disobedience). In the succeeding verses, they are stopped from certain things which are contrary to faith and are of the category of *fisq*. They incite such mischief in the hearts which poisons the whole society and which if not stopped, then those have been called *رُحَمَاءَ بَيْنَهُمْ* by God become the enemies of one another.

Readers may proceed to study the succeeding verses.

### Text and Translation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (١١) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٢) يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (١٣)

Believers! Let not one group of men make fun of another; it is possible that they may fair better than them. And let not women make fun of other women who may perhaps turn out to be better than themselves. And do not defame one another, nor call one another by bad names. Even the name of defiance is bad after faith. And those who do not repent are the ones who wrong their souls. (11)

Believers! Avoid being overly speculative, for some speculations are a blatant sin and do not pry on one another. And no one among you should indulge in backbiting others. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? So you regarded this to be abhorrent. And keep fearing God. Indeed, God is Ever-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. (12)

People! We have created you from one man and one woman and divided you into tribes and clans that you might get to know one another. The noblest of you in God's sight is he who is the most God-conscious. Indeed, God is All-knowing and Wise. (13)

### Explanation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (١١)<sup>17</sup>

17. Believers! Let not one group of men make fun of another; it is possible that they may fair better than them. And let not women make fun of other women who may perhaps turn out to be better than themselves. And do not defame one another, nor call one another by bad names. Even the name of

The words يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا are not merely meant for address; further down the evils are mentioned which are *fisq* and also contrary to faith. This address directs the attention of the Muslims to the fact that it is not befitting for those who have embraced faith to stain themselves with *fisq*.

It is neither befitting for men once they have accepted faith to make fun of other men by regarding them to be inferior to them nor is it permitted that women should ridicule other women. In the sight of God, it is faith and deeds which make a person noble or ignoble and true weight carried by faith and deeds will be known on the Day of Judgement through God's scale of justice. It is possible that a person regards himself to be superior but on the Day of Judgement the scale of God tells us that his faith and deeds carry no weight. It is similarly possible that he who was never given any importance by the people of the world was given a status in the kingdom of God which was way above those who regarded him to be lowly.

In the verse, women are emphatically mentioned with men even though apparently there was no need for it. The general words لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ were enough for them as well. However, in the mention of both morality and immorality, the Almighty has specially mentioned women where they are emphatically urged to strive to gain high reward or to save them from some trial. Here it is this second case. The evil from which men are stopped here is found if not more in women then certainly not less than in men. Women who are conceited because they regard their family, lineage or financial situation or apparent looks to be superior, speak in very humiliating tones with women whom they regard inferior to themselves.

The things which have been forbidden here have a special inner aspect, and the purpose, in fact, is to uproot it. The verse which is coming up at the end of this section points to this very inner aspect. Among the various evils invented by Satan to mislead man is the trial of superiority of one's race, creed, family and tribe. Those who are inflicted with this evil (and few are the fortunate who are able to safeguard themselves from it) obviously regard others to be inferior to themselves and when they do so, their words and attitude necessarily reflect this. A stage is reached when this air of superiority becomes a tradition in them and, in fact, wherever they can they even regard it to be part of religion. Thus the Brahmans in the Hindus, the Levites in the Israelites and the Quraysh in the Arabs had acquired a holy status for themselves which was

---

defiance is bad after faith. And those who do not repent are the ones who wrong their souls.

---

difficult for others to challenge. This is what happened to every nation and in spite of its tall claims to human equality, their evil persists even today. So much so, Muslims who had been made instituted to uproot this evil have themselves succumbed to it and they are now divided into countless tribes and clans and each regards itself to be superior to the other. An expression to this air of superiority can be witnessed every now and then in the statements and slogans of every race and tribe. As a natural result of this, hate and spite arise for one another which then assume the shape of enmity and envy and the stage is reached when they end up fighting and severing ties from one another.

Here the Qur'ān, in order to protect Muslims from this evil, has reminded them that the Almighty by His grace took them out from the darkness of ignorance and brought them forth into light. They should also remember that their society has been established on the principle of mutual brotherhood (إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ) and that they have been made merciful for one another (رُحَمَاءَ بَيْنَهُمْ), so they must not consider some of their brothers to be inferior or ridicule and make fun of them and in this manner distort the whole set up of the society.

The words عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ state the real wisdom in this regard: the basis of honour and respect is not race, clan, family, tribe and nation or riches; the real basis is a person's faith and piety, and it is on the Day of Judgement that it will be decided that who in the sight of God is more noble and who in spite of his tall claims to lineage and ancestry and vanity in his status has no significance before the Almighty.

Consider next the expression: وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ. The word لمز means to blame someone and to say something sarcastic to someone while gesturing towards him with the eye. Thus, for example, in Sūrah Tawbah, the words used for the Hypocrites are: الَّذِينَ يَلْمِزُونَ الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٧٩:٩) (as for those who taunt the believers, (9:79)) ie when poor and indigent Muslims would spend in the way of God from their hard-earned money, the Hypocrites in order to discourage them would ridicule them to demean them. They would typically remark: "Look at these! They are trying to become examples of generosity." Such statements not only reflect the hate but also their arrogance. They are meant to dishearten others or to create envy for them – and both these things spread poison in the society.

The word تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ is used in this verse the way it is in: وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ (٢٩:٤) (do not kill yourselves, (4:29)). It is evident from this usage that a Muslim who censures another Muslim in fact censures his own self because all Muslims on the principle of إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ are brothers to one another. In other words, a brother who ridiculed and censured



another brother is as if he aimed his arrow at his own chest and thereby wounded it.

The words تَنَابَرُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ mean “to call others with bad names.” Just as calling a person or a nation with good names is to show respect and honour, calling someone with bad names is to demean and disrespect him. Derogatory names come on to the tongue very easily and their effect is very far-reaching and permanent. The ill-will created by them remains for generations and a nation in which this tendency increases so much that poets, literary writers, editors and leaders spend all their intelligence in inventing bad names for their adversaries, should only pray for its well-being; its unity is bound to get divided. It needs to be kept in consideration that this tendency was at its peak in the Arabs. That poet and orator would be considered as the greatest in his nation who would be unrivalled in eulogizing the superiority of his nation and in censuring and humiliating others. If their satirical poetry is read, one can see how prominent a status they had in this regard. This proclivity of theirs never allowed to unite them as one nation. They would continue to try to overthrow and vanquish one another. For the first time in their history, it was Islam which introduced unity and the brotherhood of faith in them as a result of which they became worthy of leading and guiding the world. The Qur’ān here has informed them of these very evils of the age of *jāhiliyyah*: the Almighty has blessed them with faith and Islam and hence they should value and honour it and must not be lured away by Satan and not plunge into the abyss from which the Almighty has saved them.

Consider the next the part of the verse: بِئْسَ الْإِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ. The words بِئْسَ and نِعَمَ are hyperbolic in nature. The exact meaningful translation of this sentence would be: “very evil is the name of *fisq* after faith.” It is like saying: الشرير كَأَسْمِهِ (even the word naughty is bad what to speak of the badness of being naughty). Even in our language we say: “Sir! Even the name of it stinks.”

The addition is pointing to the fact that if a person had not been introduced to faith and committed something of the nature of *fisq* (defiance), then this was not something very odd; however, once the Almighty has acquainted someone with the fragrance of faith and as is evident from the words وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ (but God has endeared faith to you and ingrained it in your hearts), then even the name of *fisq* should be abhorrent to him what to speak of *fisq* being committed by him.

It is evident from the above sentence of the verse that whatever things have been prohibited in the previous verses are of the category of *fisq*

and the sensitivity of believers to faith should be so sharp that they hate and detest the very name of *fisq* what to speak of committing something of the sort.

The words: *وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ* very sternly warn people who even after this explanation commit some *fisq* of the sort specified above. The verse means that people who do not repent from these things should remember that they are the wrong-doers. In other words, the Almighty has delineated the blessings of faith before them and also informed them of the consequences of disbelief and *fisq*. The responsibility is now on the people themselves. Those who even after this conclusive communication of the truth will not desist will definitely face the consequences and this would not be an act of injustice on the part of God; they themselves will be the ones who will be responsible of committing this injustice to themselves.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٢)<sup>18</sup>

Here the believers are addressed afresh and stopped from certain things which though apparently seem trivial, yet they can potentially damage the heart of a person so much that it does not remain conducive to *taqwā*. Thus, people who hold faith dear must necessarily protect themselves from such evils. The first thing mentioned is that a person should not nurture ill-founded thoughts about others in his hearts. He should not harbour whatever evil thoughts that arise in him or others. It is but natural for good or bad thoughts to arise in one's heart about people whom a person encounters in life. It is these thoughts which establish or sever a person's relationship with another. Viewed thus, it is these thoughts which make and break relationships in a society. On the basis of this importance which thoughts occupy, a person should not carelessly accept or reject them; on the contrary, he should be very sharp and alive to them. In this regard, the guidance provided by Islam to its followers is that a Muslim must always think well of others unless it is proven to him that some

---

18. Believers! Avoid being overly speculative, for some speculations are a blatant sin and do not pry on one another. And no one among you should indulge in backbiting others. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? So you regarded this to be abhorrent. And keep fearing God. Indeed, God is Ever-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful.

person is not worthy of this. Thinking well of a person is an obvious requirement of the brotherhood of faith on which Islam has founded its society and which has been explained earlier. On the other hand, if a person adopts the attitude of entertaining and harbouring all sorts of ill-founded thoughts that come to his mind, then the example of such a person is that of a hunter who becomes so blind in his obsession for catching fish that he also catches snakes. Obviously, there is a great possibility for a person who becomes blind in his obsession for catching fish to end up losing his own life one day as a result. The Qur'ān has stopped Muslims from this very danger that one must not start conjecturing too much because certain conjectures are blatant sins which may doom a person. The guidance which emerges from this directive is that a person should not become so mentally sick as to think ill of others; on the contrary, he should always think well of others. If the deed or words of a person induce him to think ill of him, he should try as far as he can to make a good justification, if it can be made. He should only think contrarily when he is not able to make any sound justification. It is better to think positively of a person who deserves to be thought of negatively than to think negatively of a person who deserves to be thought of positively. In Ḥadīth narratives, a believer is eulogized as: *الْمُؤْمِنُ غَيْرُ كَرِيمٍ* (a believer is noble and innocent).<sup>19</sup> In these times, the favourite principle of people is that they should harbour ill-thoughts for others except if they prove themselves to be thought of otherwise; people regard this attitude to be one reflecting political acumen and think that this cleverness is necessary to deal with enemies. I have already explained this under the previous *sūrah's* verse: *أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ*. However, how can this political acumen be true for believers when they have been directed by the Qur'ān to be *أَذِلَّةٌ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ* (polite to the believers) and *رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ* (merciful to one another).

The second thing mentioned in the verse is *وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا* (and do not be inquisitive). Just as in the above part it is not positive speculation that has been forbidden but negative that is, here also the prohibition actually relates to being inquisitive for an evil purpose. In other words, here the intention of a person is to try to find some fault or mistake in the private life of another person and have access to the secrets of his family and family life. Sometimes, the motive of this probing is jealousy for it soothes a person to find out such facts about someone he considers to be his rival. At other times, the motive is hatred and animosity: he wants to humiliate another person by informing others of his faults. This latter tendency has

---

19. Abū Dā'ūd Sulymān ibn al-Ash'ath al-Sajistānī, *Sunan*, vol. 4 (n.p.: Dār al-fikr, n.d.), 251, (no. 4790).

now become a profession to which newspaper journalism has given a great impetus. Some journalists are in perpetual search of scandals and the journalist who is considered to be the most successful is the one who is able to lay his hands on a scandal in the private life of a famous person which makes his newspaper or journal sell like hot cakes. Such spying and probing is counter to mutual sympathy and brotherhood which are the foundations of an Islamic society; for this reason, Muslims have been stopped from indulging in them. On the other hand, probing which a Muslim does to find out the circumstances of another person so that he can help him in his difficulties and needs or the spying and probing which an Islamic state does to be fully informed about the circumstances of its citizens, is neither implied here nor is it prohibited. On the contrary, such spying is a very virtuous act on the part of a neighbour so that he is aware of the circumstances and problems which his neighbour is encountering and is able to help him out. Similarly, for a state, this attitude is not just an act of virtue, it is in fact its responsibility to arrange to be informed of the good or bad circumstances of its citizens so that it is able to properly discharge its duties.

The third directive mentioned is *وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا* (and do not indulge in backbiting). Backbiting means speaking about the flaws of a person in his absence. The fact that this is done in his absence incorporates in the very meaning of backbiting the aspect that the targeted person does not get to know of it. In pursuance of keeping it secret, a backbiter gives his statements before people who hold the same opinion and are his confidants sharing the objective with him or at least are people about whom he is sure that they are not the ones who sympathize with the person he is targeting and will not reveal this secret to him. It is this very aspect of backbiting which makes it a detestable and despicable act because through it neither is the objective of supporting the cause of the truth is achieved nor is there any hope of reforming anyone through it. Through it, a coward is only able to vent his emotions.

There are some “positive” people who think that every form of mentioning evil comes under backbiting. They think that the *jarh* of the Hādhith scholars on the narrators, bearing witness against someone in the court, censuring someone on some evil, reporting someone to the police, divulging a bad habit of a person to someone who wants to seek advice about him and other similar things all come under backbiting; however, they have been deemed permissible because of “strategy”. From here, they enunciate a legal precept: all the prohibitions of the *sharī‘ah* are not eternal; hence they have the right to make them permissible if their strategy deems so. In my opinion, this is a great evil against religion and

can lead to several other evils. Thus I have written independent articles to refute this view, and here in this *tafsīr* too, I will, in a succeeding section, throw light on some of its aspects.

The words **أَيُّحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ** are meant to explain the horrific nature of backbiting with an example: a person who speaks ill of his brother in his absence is as if he is eating his meat whilst he is dead and is unable to defend himself in any way. No one will like this; so when no one can tolerate it, then why do people indulge in a similar despicable act of backbiting. The word **مَيْتًا** is an accusative of state from the *mudāf* found in **أَخِيهِ**. This is a portrayal of his helplessness in defending himself.

The words **وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَحِيمٌ** sound a warning as well as urge people to repent and reform themselves. The verse says: Fear God; those who become used to consuming the meat of their brother without any cost start cherishing this so much that they end up losing their faith. God has sounded a timely warning to them that they should try to protect themselves from this danger through repentance and self-reformation. If they repent, God is very eager to forgive them and to show mercy to them.

There are six things from which a person is stopped in these two verses (11 and 12). A little deliberation shows that the first of these three: making fun, defaming others and calling others by bad names are evil which a person commits openly; the other three evils: making bad estimations, being inquisitive and backbiting relate to the private lives of people and are done in the absence of the discussed person among close associates. Both these types of evil are forbidden on the basis of the Islamic principle of *tazkiyah* (self-purification) which is mentioned in the Qur'ān by the words: **وَذَرُوا ظَاهِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ (١٢٠:٦)** (and leave the hidden and the apparent aspect of a sin, (6:120)). Until a person cleanses himself of the evils which relate to his inner-self, the awareness of the fact that God knows what is hidden is not fully grounded in him. Without this, there is no responsibility of *taqwā* nurturing in a person's heart.

**يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (١٣)**<sup>20</sup>

By means of this general address, the evil of showing pride and vanity on one's lineage, family and tribe is uprooted in one stroke! People are

---

20. People! We have created you from one man and one woman and divided you into tribes and clans that you might get to know one another. The noblest of you in God's sight is he who is the most God-conscious. Indeed, God is All-knowing and Wise.

told to fully keep in mind the fact that they are the progeny of one man and woman: all mankind was created from Adam and Eve; for this reason, no one holds superiority to others as far as his species is concerned. People have been divided into families and tribes only for identification and introduction. The Almighty has not granted any superior status to any special family so that those belonging to it become more respectful in His eyes and they start regarding themselves to be superior to others. Just as the Almighty has made people distinct as far as their looks, colour and physiques are concerned so that people can identify one another, in the same manner he has created the divisions of families and tribes so that people can recognize one another. It has no significance beyond this so that the people of a family and clan should become conceited that they are more respectful in the sight of God and that they have been granted superiority to others. The basis of respect in the sight of God is *taqwā*. The most respectful in the sight of God is he who fears him the most and is the most vigilant in abiding by the bounds and limits set by Him.

The words إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ imply that the Almighty will not be bothered the slightest in judging people on the basis of this standard. He knows everything and has knowledge of each and every word and deed of every person. He who is worthy of respect shall certainly gain a place of respect however unknown and of lowly origin he may be. And he who is not worthy of it, will be flung by the Almighty into a pit he deserves even though he may belong to a family as noble as the Quraysh and the Hashimites.

### Some Guidance provided by the Previous Section of Verses

The guidance provided by the previous section of verses has been explained below them as far as was required; however, the evils of inquisitiveness and backbiting need further explanation which follows.

Since in these times the concept of freedom of an individual is so prevalent in the minds some people think that just as Islam has stopped people from prying into the affairs of others, it has also stopped governments from prying into the affairs of its citizens. It should hold them accountable only in matters which openly come to their notice. As far as household affairs are concerned, they are beyond its jurisdiction of accountability. In support of this view, some people have cited the incident of the caliph ‘Umar (rta)<sup>21</sup> as well in which one night he heard a

---

21. See, for example: Abū Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī,

person who was singing in his house. Being suspicious, he climbed the wall; he saw that liquor as well as a woman was present. He called out: O Enemy of God! Do you think that you will disobey God and God will not reveal your secret? The person responded by saying: O Caliph of the Believers! Be not in haste; if I have sinned, you have committed three sins at the same time: God has forbidden inquisitiveness and you have done it; God has directed us to enter houses through their doors and you have entered by climbing the wall; God has directed not to enter a house without seeking permission and you have entered my house without my permission. At this, ‘Umar (rta) acknowledged his mistake and did not take any step against that person; however, he did take a promise from him to adopt the way of righteousness.

Some people have recorded this narrative in books which relate to high morals and which urge and warn people to adopt good. However, neither is it reliable with regard to its chain of narration nor with regard to its content. As far as the weakness of the chain of narration is concerned, this much is enough that many especially the proponents of *taṣawwuf* do not in principle give any importance to investigation of chain of narration in matters of morality and exhortation. If a story carries an effective message, they readily cite it in their books without assessing its content and chain of narration.

As far as the text of the narrative which reports this incident is concerned, deliberation on it will show that it makes little sense.

Firstly, it is quite improbable that a person in Madīnah and that too in the times of the caliph ‘Umar (rta) indulge in such merry-making in such a loud manner that he is overheard by ‘Umar (rta) who chanced by and who thus had to interfere in this indecency. If right in the centre of the empire Satan was so bold in his practices of luring people, then it has to be conceded that even ‘Umar (rta) could not over-awe Satan even though the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said Satan coils away from the path treaded by ‘Umar (rta).

Secondly, if this incident is true, it will have to be conceded that ‘Umar (rta) was not even aware of the directives of the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth as per which it was not allowed to enter houses by scaling walls and it is necessary that permission be sought by offering salutations from outside; if permission is granted, one should enter otherwise the person should silently return after offering the salutations thrice. Can any sane person believe that a merry-maker for the first time informed ‘Umar (rta) of these explicit directives of the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth. ‘Umar (rta) never got

a chance, God forbid, to recite Sūrah Nūr and Sūrah Ḥujurāt.

Thirdly, if ‘Umar (sws) so obediently accepted these three mistakes, why did he not direct his governors and administrators to stop prying on the houses of people by confessing that till then he was at fault and that now he has realized his mistake, for this act at the same time contains three practices which are against the *sharī‘ah*; they should let people whatever rumpus they want to create in their houses; if they have any doubt, they should offer the ceremonial salutations at the door step and seek permission for entry and if they are given permission, only then they should enter otherwise they should return after thrice offering these salutations. As far as I know, not only did ‘Umar (rta) not send such a directive, there are numerous incidents recorded in history which show that his administrators continued to pry and be inquisitive and ‘Umar (rta) himself indulged in this to the extent that when infants would cry at night, he would try to find out the reason for this.

Fourthly, if this narrative is accepted, it will have to be conceded that if in an Islamic state some people consume liquor in the confines of their houses, indulge in lecherous activities with women of loose character and throw dance and music parties and even accumulate ammunition like bombs and Sten guns, even then the police has no right to enter their houses and disturb their merry-making. So much so, even the caliph of the time does not have the authority to dare enter the houses of people without permission and if ever by mistake he does so, he should only gently ask the inhabitants to abstain from such an activity.

Though this narrative did not deserve any attention, yet in these times since people who are trying to establish an Islamic government have very emphatically presented it, I was forced to write these aforementioned paragraphs. Nonetheless, this narrative, in my opinion, is absolutely unreliable. An Islamic government is not only responsible for the peace, justice and security of a country, it also looks after the character and conduct of its citizens. Thus it has the right to pry wherever there is a doubt; however, exercising each right has some moral and legal restrictions which a government must also keep in consideration. If a government does not abide by these restrictions, then even if there is no one to stop it from this high-handedness it shall be regarded as a criminal in the sight of God. This is because they have wrongly exercised a right given to them to protect the citizens and their peace and justice. Instead of doing so, they harassed innocent citizens through its means.

As far as general masses are concerned, it is essential that they keep in consideration the following things:

---



-- inquisitiveness and prying which is for the purpose of good, is based on pious intention and objective, is not only not forbidden, as has been explained earlier, it is in fact a very virtuous deed. The Qur'ān has directed believers to find poor who have self esteem in them and to try to take the initiative in reaching them; they should not be expected to ardently beg for their needs.

-- if there is a doubt about someone that his clandestine activities are a danger for the life, honour and wealth of innocent people or he wants to harm the peace, justice and security of the country, then people should not ignore him thinking that his activities are not their business. People should try to reform him and if it is not possible for them, then help should be sought from those who are in this position or are able to stop him. This responsibility has been taught to the believers by giving the example of the passengers of a ship.<sup>22</sup>

-- If a personal blemish of a person which is confined to his own self comes in the notice of someone, he should try to counsel him if he is in this position. If he is not in this position, he should ignore his blemish and conceal it. God also hides the blemishes of people who hide the blemishes of others. However, if this blemish is contagious in nature, then a person should follow the directive of the Prophet (sws) which relates to curbing evil.

The dominant reason in people not being able to understand the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth is because people do not reflect on the occasion and background of Qur'ānic verses and prophetic narratives. No doubt, there are narratives which mention concealing the sins of a Muslim brother; however, if a person merely on the basis of these narratives passes the verdict that one should not have any concern regarding the vice and virtue of others and that one must mind one's own business and that if some evil comes to one's notice, one should conceal it so that in the Hereafter God conceals our sins too, then though there is a narrative to support this verdict, it will cause great confusion in the minds of people. This is because there are narratives which explicitly state that if a person sees an evil he should curb it by his hands; if this is not possible, he should try to curb it through his tongue and if even this is not possible, he should regard it to be evil in his heart; there is no level of faith below it.<sup>23</sup>

This confusion obviously has arisen because enough effort has not

---

22. The parable goes like this: If anyone finds a passenger of a ship chopping a hole in the hull, it is his duty to take the axe away, however he has to do that, or else everyone will drown.

23. See, for example: Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 42, (no. 177).

been expended into determining the occasion and background of both these narratives. If this is ascertained, no confusion arises. If a person is urinating while standing, one can ignore him by thinking that he might be having some excuse; if the excuse is not evident, one can even earnestly counsel him that urinating in this manner is against the norms of decency as well as against the Islamic etiquette. If one is not in a position to counsel him, then one should hide this ill-mannered behaviour of his and not advertise it. Inshallāh, God will reward this act. However, if it is known about a person that he has set up a liquor manufacturing plant in his house or has stacked hashish or has hidden arms and ammunition or is running a brothel and one who is in a position to report this to the authorities covers it up thinking that God will cover his sins on the Day of Judgement, then, this in my opinion, is mere wishful thinking. People who adopt this attitude might end up losing their faith what speak of earning reward.

In the issue of backbiting as well, these people have created a similar confusion because of a lack of deliberation. They have forgotten that just as the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth mention the prohibition of backbiting they have similarly positively directed Muslims in a very explicit manner to assess reporting by investigating the narrators, to bear true witness, to curb evil and to be well-wishers of Muslims. When the question arose of reconciling these two types of directives and people could not understand how this could be done, they reconciled them by saying that all these things come under backbiting but they have been declared lawful because of strategy. This is in spite of the fact that investigation of narrators, bearing witness, curbing evil and well-wishing of Muslims are not merely allowed in religion; they have in fact been made obligatory by it. The grace and perfection of the Islamic system depend on them. The discipline of *sharī'ah* is based on investigation of narrators; bearing witness is the responsibility of this *ummah* for which it had been instituted in this world. The life and sustenance of this *ummah* has been made dependent by God on the responsibility of curbing evil; similarly, being well-wishers of Muslims is not only a requirement of being in the fraternity it is also a requirement of faith, as has been mentioned in this *sūrah*. As far as backbiting is concerned, it has a specific sphere which I have already explained while discussing the verse. Its prohibition in no way stops or interferes in religious obligations so that under a strategy it needs to be legalized to carry them out. Neither have the scholars of Ḥadīth allowed it nor revivalists nor reformers and nor can ever a need arise for a Muslim to allow it in order to fulfil certain religious obligations imposed on him. If ever this need can arise, it can only be for the people who have made the

### Section III: Verse (15-18)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah* in which the inner personalities of those people are revealed whose attitude was condemned in the first five verses. I had indicated earlier that certain tribes which lived in the whereabouts of Madīnah had entered into the folds of the Muslims when they saw the rising might of Islam; however, since they were far off from the centre, they were lacking in training and instruction. For this very reason, they harboured this conceited notion that they had done a great favour to the Prophet (sws) and to Islam because they had embraced faith without any war being waged against them. It is obvious that in such a state of mind how could they have displayed the manners and etiquette which their faith entailed. Thus they, at times, would do something against manners and for which they were rebuked in the initial verses. However, the nature of address was general so that whoever were inflicted with these blemishes could reform themselves. Consequently, the guidance this situation demanded was given. Now, here at the end, they are addressed by their name and their real malady has been exposed so that they turn towards its remedy. The reason is that in its presence, it is impossible for faith to blossom.

In the light of this background, readers may recite the succeeding verses:

#### Text and Translation

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُل لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١٤) إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ (١٥) قُلْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ اللَّهُ بِدِينِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (١٦) يَمُنُونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَا تَمُنُوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُمْ بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٧) إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٨)

The Bedouins declared: “We have embraced faith.” Tell them: “You have not embraced faith; rather say: “We have shown obedience,” and faith has not yet found its way into your hearts. And if you obey God and the Messenger, God will not reduce your deeds the slightest. God is

Forgiving and Merciful. True believers are those who professed faith in God and His Messenger and then were never inflicted with any doubt, and who fought with their wealth and with their persons for the cause of God. Such are the truthful. (14-15)

Tell them: “Are you informing God of your religion, even though God knows what is in the heavens and in the earth and God has knowledge of all things?” (16)

They regard embracing Islam to be a favour to you: Tell them: “Do not regard embracing faith to be a favour to me; in fact, it is God’s favour to you that He guided you to faith, if you are truthful. God knows all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth. And God is watching whatever you do.” (17-18)

### Explanation

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِّنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٤)<sup>24</sup>

The Bedouins alluded to in this verse refer to the villagers who lived in the whereabouts of Madīnah and who have been mentioned earlier in the *sūrah* as the ones who when they converse with the Prophet (sws) address him in a manner as they would address someone equal to them. When they would come to meet him, their wish would be that the Prophet (sws) meet them without any delay as soon they arrived. So much so, if he would be in his house, they would not care to wait and would start calling his name from outside his house. This gruffness in their conduct was not only due to a lack of training and instruction but also because they thought that they had done a favour to the Prophet (sws) by embracing faith without waging war. As a result, they reckoned that they should be rewarded by the Prophet (sws) considering them to have done a favour to him and at all times pamper them. It is this mentality of theirs which is criticized here.

The words قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا mean: The Bedouins say: “We have embraced faith.” By this statement of theirs, they did not merely lay claim to faith but as will become evident from later verses they would say this to express their favour to the Prophet (sws). At every instance, they would try to communicate to the Prophet (sws) that by embracing faith they had

---

24. The Bedouins declared: “We have embraced faith.” Tell them: “You have not embraced faith; rather say: “We have shown obedience,” and faith has not yet found its way into your hearts. And if you obey God and the Messenger, God will not reduce your deeds the slightest. God is Forgiving and Merciful.

increased his respect and honour. They would also reckon that they are worthy as a result of this that the Prophet (sws) give them due consideration and whole-heartedly accept whatever suggestions they give.

The words *قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا* actually form an answer given to these people through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). They are told that their claim to faith is not true; the only claim they can make is that of obedience. The word *إِسْلَام* is used here in its literal meaning which means "outward obedience." The real meaning of *إِسْلَام* is to submit totally to God. However, it is used merely in the meaning of outward obedience. I have explained both these meanings at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*. Here it is used in the second of these meanings. It has been mentioned earlier that these people had accepted Islam because they were over-awed with its rising political force and not because of the call itself. For this reason, the spirit of Islam had not yet found its way in their hearts; they had only come into subservience to the political sovereignty of Islam. It is while pointing to this reality that they are told that it is not befitting for them to lay claim to faith; all they can say is that they have become subservient to the political force of Islam. Concealed in this answer is the fact that since this is the case, they have done no favour and should not be presented thus; this too is a form of subservience; the only difference is that they have been made subservient without waging any war and this is not something which they can boast about as a favour.

The words *وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ* express the fact that they should not make tall claims to faith. It has knocked at the doors of their hearts but has not yet entered it. Such faith is not acceptable to God. The faith acceptable to God is one which takes strong root and influences it so much that it becomes difficult for a person to think or do something while disregarding it.

The words *وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا* sound a warning to them at their attitude of boastfulness under discussion. Why should they boast about accepting faith and doing some service to Islam? God is not going to reduce any of their deeds; in fact, he is going to reward every deed, big or small. They will be rewarded seventy times for a good deed. Each deed of theirs will be useful only to them and not to God. So when they are doing something to benefit their own selves, why should they express this as a favour to God and His Prophet (sws).

The words *إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ* mean that God is forgiving and ever merciful. He will forgive their blemishes and faults and not reduce their reward to the slightest extent. There should not be the minutest fear that He will make excuse of small faults to reduce the weight of their deeds.

Also implied here is that if till then they had wrongly felt that they had done a favour to God and His Prophet (sws) by doing some service, they should now reform themselves after this warning. They should seek forgiveness from God. He will forgive them. He is every-forgiving and ever-merciful.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ (١٥)<sup>25</sup>

It is said that every claimant to faith cannot be regarded as a believer. True believers in the sight of God are only those who profess faith in God and His Prophet (sws) from their hearts and then were never inflicted with any doubt; they waged war for the cause of God though both their persons and their wealth. They spent their wealth for the support of religion and if the need arose to sacrifice their lives, they never desisted from it. The verse says that it is these people who are true in their claim to faith. As far as those people are concerned who make tall claims to faith but because of their hesitancy are neither ready to bear any loss for this cause nor have the courage to sacrifice their life and wealth for it are only boastful fanatics. They have no worth in the sight of God.

Deliberation will show that the words *وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ* are mentioned to show their clarity and lack of hesitancy. If a person does not abstain from sacrificing his life and wealth to achieve his objective, then this is an irrefutable evidence of the fact that he is fully convinced of the veracity of his objective. If he is not willing to sacrifice his wealth nor endanger his life, then however much vehemently he state his infatuation for his objective, his practice shows that he is still not convinced of it.

قُلْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ اللَّهَ بِدِينِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (١٦)<sup>26</sup>

These people very condescendingly say that they have embraced faith. The Prophet (sws) is told to ask them whether they are trying to inform

25. True believers are those who professed faith in God and His Messenger and then were never inflicted with any doubt, and who fought with their wealth and with their persons for the cause of God. Such are the truthful.

26. Tell them: "Are you informing God of your religion, even though God knows what is in the heavens and in the earth and God has knowledge of all things?"

God of their faith. If this is what they have in mind, then they should tell them that he knows whatever is between the heavens and the earth and is aware of everything. He is both potentially and practically aware of everything. Nothing can remain hidden from Him. The implication is that if they are very proud of their faith, then they should boast it before someone who is unaware of it. What use is it of boasting it before someone who is aware of everything – open or hidden – of this Universe. Would He Who knows everything not know the extent of their faith.

يَمْتُونُ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَا تَمْتُونَا عَلَىٰ إِسْلَامِكُمْ بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَذَا كُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٧)<sup>27</sup>

After revealing the reality behind their claim to faith, their claim to Islam is also brought to light. These people express their favour to the Prophet (sws) that they have accepted Islam. In other words, it is their conceited claim that by accepting Islam they have increased his respect and increased the majesty of Islam. Thus they would regard themselves to have done a favour to Islam and the Prophet (sws) and that it was the duty of the Prophet (sws) to respect the favour they have done to him. The verse says that the Prophet (sws) should tell them to not boast of their favour to him. If they are really truthful in their claim, then they have not done a favour to the Prophet (sws) rather it is God Who has done them a favour that He guided them to faith. The words *إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ* should be deliberated upon. They imply that in the very first place, their claim to faith is mere bragging and if there is some truth in their claim, then they should be grateful to God that He has given them the willingness to it. The preposition of *ل* after *هَذَا كُمْ* incorporates the meaning of “urge and willingness” (*taufiq*) in this sentence. I have already explained this style at an appropriate place in this *tafsir*.

It is evident from this discussion that if a person does a small or big service to religion, he neither does a favour to God and His Messenger nor to religion; in fact, he does a favour to his own self because he sows seeds for his own future. It is God Who actually did a favour to him that He gave him the urge and willingness to serve His religion and in this way opened up the way to eternal success for him. Here it needs to be kept in consideration that the answer has not been given by the tongue of the Prophet (sws) to these people viz. they should not say that they have

---

27. They regard embracing Islam to be a favour to you: Tell them: “Do not regard embracing faith to be a favour to me; in fact, it is God’s favour to you that He guided you to faith, if you are truthful.

done a favour to him; it is His favour to them that he has opened the way of guidance to them. Had his answer been given, there was a place for it; however, what best a prophet can do is to expend all his efforts in trying to bring people to the right path; he does not, however, have the authority to grant them the urge and willingness to accept faith. This is only the authority of God and the whole matter depends on this very urge and willingness.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ<sup>28</sup>(١٨)

The subject discussed in verse sixteen is brought up here in a different style: they should not present their faith and religion as means of expressing their favour to the Prophet (sww) and to Islam. God is fully aware of all the secrets of the heavens and the earth and people should bear in mind that God is watching all their deeds. The implication is that the real thing is not the claim but to practice what they claim. If they practice thus, their claim will find weight with God even if they do not express it and if they do not, then it will have no weight before Him however much vociferously they make this claim.

With the blessing of God, I come to the end of the tafsīr of this group.  
 فالحمد لله على ذلك (all gratitude be to God for this.)

Rahmānābād,

13<sup>th</sup> December, 1976 AD

20<sup>th</sup> Dhū al-ḥijjah, 1396 AH

---

28. ... God knows all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth. And God is watching whatever you do."